



Senate Natural Resources Committee
 Chair: Debby Barrett (R-Dillon)
 Vice Chair: Greg Hinkle (R-Thompson Falls)
 Vice Chair: Christine Kaufmann (D-Helena)
 John Brenden (R-Scobey)
 Brad Hamlett (D-Cascade)
 Verdell Jackson (R-Kalispell)

Jim Keane (D-Butte)
 Cliff Larsen (D-Missoula)
 Jim Peterson (R-Butte)
 Donald Steinbeisser (R-Sidney)
 Mitch Tropila (D-Great Falls)
 Chas Vincent (R-Libby)
 Edward Walker (R-Billings)
 David Wanzonried (D-Missoula)

February 9, 2011

Please Pass SB 267 - TMDL deadline extension

Dear Ms. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

The Clark Fork Coalition is comprised of 2,600 members dedicated to protecting and restoring the Clark Fork River watershed. We are also a member of the State TMDL Advisory Group (STAG). The Coalition urges you to pass SB 267 to ensure Montana can complete TMDLs that effectively characterize our impaired streams, rivers, and lakes.

The Coalition would like to see timely completion of the TMDLs, especially on areas of significant concern, such as streams supporting bull trout or westslope cutthroat trout. However, we also recognize the value of "quality over quantity."

Although the DEQ has finished about half of the TMDLs on the 1996 list, more have been added and around 1,800 TMDLs still need to be completed for impaired water bodies. The Coalition believes this bill allows DEQ to spend a little more time to do it right, by applying solid science and public process to produce quality TMDLs.

We also support the "list-neutral" or watershed-based approach to completing TMDLs as the best bang for the buck. This creates efficiencies for the state during implementation, because citizens and local stakeholder groups can address the identified water quality problems on a larger scale, rather than a case-by-case or basis. In addition, the pace of TMDL development has picked up considerably since DEQ began the watershed-based approach.

We've worked with the STAG and DEQ over the last several years to craft a process that better characterizes pollution problems in our celebrated rivers and streams. . The Coalition also appreciates the added oversight SB 267 would create by having the EQC review the progress of the TMDL program. We're hopeful that if this bill passes, DEQ will finish TMDLs for cold water fisheries by 2014 and for other water bodies soon after.

Thank you for your time, and for considering a "do pass" on SB 267. We appreciate your time and commitment to protecting Montana's valuable waters.

Sincerely,

Brianna Randall
 Water Policy Director

PO Box 7593
 Missoula, MT 59807
 406/542-0539 Phone
 406/542-5632 Fax